



# Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



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## Group News

As you may imagine, the issue of accommodation for our Winter talks programme has been weighing heavily with your committee. Two meetings in the main Market Hall, despite our best efforts to minimise the problems with the acoustics, have confirmed that we must find a better solution. We have a proposal and this will be discussed at the AGM.

Details of members' talks to be delivered at the AGM are announced on the back page of this newsletter and I enclose an Agenda together with the Minutes of last year's meeting. You'll be pleased to hear that there are no plans to increase our membership charges and I enclose a renewal form in the hope that we'll be seeing you again next year. Please note that the AGM will start at the traditional time of 7.00pm.

This is the first newsletter to receive email circulation. Approximately 30% of our membership has opted for email, which represents a substantial saving on admin time as well as printing and mailing costs. I will be very pleased to receive feedback on the new approach.

Finally, may I wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for 2016.

*Martin Joyce*

## Appleby-in-Westmorland Project

On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 several members of Appleby Archaeology attended a very full day of talks at Durham Cathedral to mark what Paul Frodsham referred to as "the end of the beginning" of the Archaeology Altogether project.

The project's successes, briefly outlined by Paul in his introductory speech, were due in no small part to the army of 600 volunteers who put in an astonishing 25000 man hours work – a number of Appleby Archaeology members can be counted in this formidable statistic.

Ranging in content from prehistoric to post-Medieval, the talks on the day made for a varied summing up of the many projects undertaken during the life of Altogether Archaeology. The stone-flagged floor of the Chapterhouse was not conducive to warm feet and the acoustics were a bit "echoey" but nevertheless all who attended enjoyed the day and gained a comprehensive overview of what has been achieved by Altogether Archaeology – the scale and number of digs/excavations/field days and the results and conclusions from these were impressive.



*Altogether Archaeology volunteers excavate the Maiden Way near Alston - picture courtesy Paul Frodsham*

There is clearly a lot of archaeology under our feet in northern England and the day closed with the launch and introduction to the new North Pennines Archaeology Group which hopes to carry on in some way what Altogether Archaeology started.

At least three Appleby Archaeology members expressed interest in getting involved in this next phase of archaeological investigations – so watch this space for future updates!

*Carol Dougherty*

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## Medieval Forgers?

In November, Harry Hawkins stepped in at short notice when the original speaker had to cancel because of an injury.

The title of his talk was 'Medieval Forgers?' a reference to a suspect charter which Isabel, a Prioress at **Amathwaite nunnery**, sent to King Edward IV in about 1470 for ratification. The charter purported to be the founding document of the Nunnery, granted in 1088 by William II, the son of the Conqueror. Before revealing the twists in the tale of the charter, Harry explained his research on the history of the Nunnery.

Starting with the archaeology, what exists on the ground today? The remains of the Nunnery were demolished in 1715 and the current house and model farm were built on the site by Henry Aglionby. Until the early 2000s, this was a hotel and was well known for the Nunnery Walks, leading down to the River Eden. Some members of the Group remembered the pleasant walks, followed by the equally pleasant tea and cake in the hotel. House and farm are currently Grade 1 listed and the estate is privately owned. In 2005, English Heritage commissioned building and geophysical surveys of the site. There were 13<sup>th</sup>C remains in the house, including a window arch, whilst the geophysics revealed various structures and anomalies in the grounds, including a possible gatehouse and a cloister. In a field nearby is a stone pillar inscribed with the date 1088 but this was first noted in 1755, so was probably erected by Aglionby to commemorate the Nunnery. Also nearby is a platform in a field which is believed to be the site of a chapel.

Harry continued by citing the earliest documentary evidence of the Nunnery in the writings of a monk, Gervase of Canterbury, that refers to the Black Nuns in Inglewood. Inglewood was the Royal forest that covered large parts of central Cumberland. The 'Black Nuns' were so called because of the black habits that they wore as Benedictines. Although the actual location of the Nunnery was not mentioned in the document, King John gave 'the nuns of Ermitethwaite in

Cumberland' one mark in 1212. Armathwaite was just one of many Nunneries founded between 1100 and 1200, mostly of them poorly endowed and relying on alms. As with the monasteries, their founding principle was that of the desert fathers and, although often forgotten, the desert mothers, of the Old Testament. This academic bias was to some extent the fault of Victorian historians, often clergy and therefore men who, when writing the history of the church, neglected to mention the role of women. Harry told the Group that only in the last 25 years have academics, this time mostly female, begun detailed research.

The recorded history of the Nunnery is to be found in various court cases, grants of land and gifts in wills.

The institution of a new prioress, Katrina Lancastre, is mentioned in 1362 and at some date, they were granted the advowson of Armathwaite Church.

Harry reasonably speculated that the name Ermitethwaite, being comprised of the elements 'hermit' (from the Latin with the same meaning) and the Old Norse 'thwaite' meaning 'clearing', referred to a hermit living in a clearing in the forest. It is thought that some Nunneries were founded by the gathering of a community of religious women around a hermit. Although there is no direct connection between Armathwaite the village and the Nunnery – they are 6km apart, the village was first mentioned in 1272, well after the foundation of the Nunnery, which is located in

Ainstable parish. Harry explained that the most likely origin of the land on which the Nunnery was built was Roger, son of Matilda, the daughter of Adam, who was granted Ainstable by Henry 1.

It is unlikely that the Nunnery was ever very wealthy – in 1291, it was valued at only £13. The Prioresses would have generally been the daughters of prominent local families, the nuns from local families who could afford to give a dowry for the privilege. Being in the Borderlands, the Nunnery suffered badly from the depredations of the Scots and this might be behind the story of the 'Forgery'. Forgeries in the medieval church were rather commonplace and were often concocted to support either a pre-existing or a desired



*Medieval Nuns*

situation. For example, if a monastery required a writing to support its title to a property in lawsuit, an appropriate charter would be created, based on the belief of the monks that charters justified the ways of God to men. Amongst many others, both Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Priory had tried and succeeded using this ruse in the past.

So, speculated the speaker, were the nuns at Armathwaite simply doing the same thing? They had lost nearly everything to the Scots and all they had to go on was their continuing possession of assets which had been remembered orally, so the purpose was not to deceive or defraud, but to defend what they knew was theirs. Thus, they petitioned the King to confirm their 'charter'. In later centuries, this might have been dismissed as a forgery but at the time it was seen simply as God taking a hand in supporting their legitimate cause. In any event, Harry said, the King either believed the document was genuine or knew that it wasn't but didn't care. He issued Letters Patent in 1473 in which 'we accept, approve, ratify and confirm..... the title, estate and possession.....the same prioress and nuns have in the aforesaid house or priory, and in the lands, tenements, rents and possessions....'

Harry concluded his talk by saying that whether or not the William II charter was genuine, it had the desired effect because the Nunnery continued in existence until the Dissolution in 1537.

Harry was warmly thanked for his excellent talk

**Richard Stevens**

### Archaeology of the A66

In October, John Zant of Oxford Archaeology North, gave members an interesting account of archaeological investigations carried out in advance of road improvements on the **A66** back in 2006/7.

Work of this nature is a standard requirement on such developments but is generally a rather unnatural way of gathering archaeological information since it is of course guided by engineering considerations rather than archaeological criteria and is largely a case of "seeing what turns up". The area opened for investigation is the narrow strip defined by the roadworks themselves and, in the circumstances, the methods employed are generally fairly heavy-handed.

Nevertheless, this type of investigation provides an opportunity to take a "cross-sectional" view of the

archaeology over wide areas of the countryside. Also, where it is known in advance that the roadworks cross an area of particular interest, the civil-engineering works provide an opportunity to carry out investigations which would probably otherwise be impossible.

John described how the A66 work provided a perfect illustration of these points.

The A66 investigations related to the eastern end of the road between Greta Bridge and Scotch Corner. Very little was observed at the Greta Bridge end and John's talk concentrated on the more interesting discoveries towards Scotch Corner.

Occupation during the wide period ranging from the Mesolithic through to the early Bronze Age was poorly represented. Only a handful of flints were observed, along with a single piece of late Neolithic grooved ware pottery dated to the period 2300-2000BC.

The early-middle Iron Age (700-100BC) was represented by traces of enclosures, a roundhouse and timber structures adjacent to the known site at Rock Castle. A four-post structure here was radiocarbon dated to 800-200BC,

At Scotch Corner itself, geophysical surveying had already detected substantial areas of late Iron Age occupation in the fields on either side of the road. These were fully confirmed by the road development. It seemed that this occupation had preceded the Roman period but had been greatly expanded subsequently. The suggestion was that these were farms that had supplied the Roman garrisons. Evidence for this was the presence of shards of samian and other imported wares alongside the much rougher local pottery. The suggestion was that during this period wealth was trickling down from larger centres elsewhere.

A particular feature which the archaeologists had been very pleased to have the opportunity to investigate was the so-called Scots Dyke. This is an enigmatic earthwork some 10m wide and 1.5m high with a ditch on the eastern side. It runs for some 14 kilometres in a generally northern direction from Richmond to an apparently abrupt termination close to the major centre of Iron Age occupation at Stanwick. It is believed that Stanwick may have been the administrative centre for the Brigantes at the time of the Roman invasion. It is thought that the Scots Dyke dates originally from the Iron Age but was possibly re-used in later periods

At the point where the Scots Dyke was intersected by the A66 developments, archaeologists were able to observe it as a V-shaped ditch which, unfortunately,

proved to be almost entirely devoid of archaeology. Examination of the sedimentary infill suggested that the Dyke had been half full filled-in by 600AD and completely so by the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

Later developments were represented by the Roman Fort at Carlin Moor where a coin of Vespasian, dated 200AD was recovered. No traces of the Roman road itself were ever seen.

The excavations have been extensively documented and the reports are available both in full and as a modestly-priced booklet "The Archaeology of the A66".

*Martin Joyce*

### LDNP Conference 2015 - Prehistoric landscape near Caldbeck

This year's Lake District National Park conference (Keswick, 11<sup>th</sup> Oct) was as well-attended as ever. One particular presentation took my interest.

Every week for the last two years, rain, hail or shine, volunteers in the Caldbeck area have been out on the fells near High Pike developing a detailed field survey. The results have been very exciting and the Conference was privileged to hear a preview of their report.

Near Calebrack they have recorded a complete prehistoric landscape complete with field-systems, cairn-fields and house-platforms. Higher up on the fell, they have located burial mounds. The highlight has been the recognition that a particularly large mound may be an unrecorded long-barrow. It is the right size and shape and even features side-entrances! The latter features were revealed when a member of the survey team literally fell into a hole in the mound!

Two small standing stones were also identified aligned with a third stone incorporated in a field wall some distance away on Calebrack Hill.

Although I personally know this area quite well, I can't say that I've ever noticed any of these features. But I'm not at all surprised that it appears to have been occupied as the area has always had a "homely" feel. One thing I particularly remember is that the fellside here features several large erratic boulders that I've regularly scoured for rock carvings - without the slightest success. But fired up by the Caldbeck team's findings I'll certainly be back to have another look

*Martin Joyce*

### Autumn Lectures

#### AGM and Members evening

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> Jan

**Phyl Rouston :** Bronze Age Copper on the Great Orme

**Martin Railton :** The Appleby Research Project

#### Romans & Native Britons

Speaker : Richard Newman

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb

Traditional views of native life in Romanised settlements have recently been questioned. Recent archaeology suggests that the physical remains and material culture of the period is similar to that of the preceding Iron Age. The paper looks at the results of some recent excavations in the North that have benefitted from radiocarbon dating and detailed analysis, identifying changes over the period of the occupation.

#### Lime Burning & Lime Kilns in Westmorland

Speaker : Dr David Johnson

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> Mar

Until the mid 20th century lime touched peoples' lives in many ways, being used in buildings and rural trades, as well as in farming. Lime burning goes back many centuries and over 650 kiln sites in Westmorland have been surveyed by the speaker. The talk explores where, how and why lime was produced in Westmorland from both historical and archaeological perspectives.

#### Furness Abbey and her Daughter Houses: Irish Sea Relations in the Medieval era

Speaker : Dr Fiona Edmunds

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> Apr

